

San Antonio Express-News (TX)

S.A. Life Page 01C

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Publication Date : May 21, 2007

Olly, Olly, Oxen Free!

Once upon a time, kids couldn't wait to grow up and put away childish things. Today, maturity and adulthood are old-fashioned, while reconnecting with one's childhood is in vogue. When he was about 19 years old, Kenny Nutting reluctantly quit skateboarding when he didn't have the time -- or medical coverage -- to continue. Two years ago when his son, Dylan, 13, showed an interest in the sport, Nutting decided to dust off his old board. He's been riding it ever since.

"I never had an interest in any sports outside of skateboarding," says Nutting, 36, a composites technician at Precision Manufacturing. "This is something that you can just go outside and have some fun."

Nutting isn't alone when it comes to returning to a cherished childhood pastime. Foursquare leagues are popping up in Boston, and at least one New York City park has been outfitted for tetherball. San Antonio is a bit behind the kickball/dodge ball curve, but the playground mainstays are slowly gaining popularity among adults.

"The success of the kickball league opened people's eyes to a different type of activity that isn't basketball or softball."

The San Antonio Sports and Social Club (www.SanAntonioSSC.com) runs adult recreational leagues that include dodge ball and kickball. After four seasons, the club's Austin franchise has 62 teams while there are six teams after one season in San Antonio. Ariana Ollila, 25, an account manager at Wickley Interactive + Marketing, enjoys playing in the leagues:

"It's a nice break in the middle of the week and something to look forward to," says Ollila. "And you don't need any experience."

If you remember elementary school, you probably remember **kickball** rules: swing your leg at a 13-inch red ball and run around the bases -- with the added recommendation that adults put down their cans of beer first.

Along with the games' simplicity, the paucity of athletic posturing and the focus on friendly competition are draws for many people:

"It's as much social as it is a sport and there's an element of fun...and you don't need to be a great athlete to enjoy it."

The 2004 film comedy "Dodgeball" is often cited as the impetus behind the resurgence of that schoolyard game.

It certainly helped make the San Antonio Sports Foundation's inaugural Duck 'N Dodge Dodgeball Tournament held last year a huge success, says Mary Japhet, associate executive director of external affairs for the San Antonio Sports Foundation. Ninety coed teams (almost 500 people) registered for the fundraising event for the San Antonio Sports Foundation. A second tournament will be held this September.

"We reached a new group of people who learned about us and it introduced us to a new demographic," says Japhet. In a nod to schoolyard nostalgia, Texas Public Radio will hold a Hands On Recess members-only event in the Olmos Park Basin picnic area June 2. It is partnering with 10 nonprofit organizations to offer activities such as foursquare, double Dutch jump rope, hula hoop and hopscotch.

The ability to reconnect with former consumers hasn't been lost on the businesses that manufacture equipment for these activities:

"Companies are reissuing boards from the 1980s called 'old school,'" says Matt Marshall, 33, a co-owner of Goodtimes Skateboards. "They're for a guy who used to skateboard and he comes in with his kid and he sees the board and remembers it from when he was a kid."

Other than skinned knees, welts and age-related aches and pains, most of these games are low-risk. But while they may be considered child's play, a little adult perspective is recommended when you revisit them after an extended layoff.

"I can do about 75 percent of the things I used to," says Nutting. "The other 25 percent I'm not even willing to try."

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